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RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA 0442
RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO 0483
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 5046
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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TER](#) [MR](#) [FR](#) [PU](#)
SUBJECT: GUINEA BISSAU:AL-QAIDA TERRORISTS NABBED

Classified By: Charge Jay T. Smith for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Government of Guinea-Bissau cooperated with French authorities to apprehend and extradite five Mauritians, at least two of whom admitted to being al-Qaida members wanted in the December 24, 2007 murder of French tourists in Mauritania. At least one of the men had previously lived in Guinea-Bissau and the killers appear to have had a support network in the country. The Judicial Police (JP) Chief believes there may be a link to drug trafficking but lacks proof. Without resources or support from the GOGB, the JP will be unable to conduct further investigations related to this case and will continue to be impotent in the face of drug trafficking. Prime Minister Cabi requested a meeting with EmbOffs to urge rapid action in reopening the embassy. End Summary.

AL-QAIDA IN BISSAU

12. (U) On January 11, security and government officials reacted quickly and effectively to a request by French officials to arrest Mauritanian al-Qaida terrorists. The two men apprehended in Bissau confessed to an attack on a family of French tourists in Aleg, Mauritania that left four dead and one seriously wounded. The attack led organizers to cancel the annual Dakar rally, a race from Lisbon to Dakar which pumps millions of tourism dollars into local economies. A third suspect escaped and is suspected to be in Dakar. The men confirmed they had trained at an Al-Qaida terrorist camp.

13. (U) In addition to the two men involved in the Aleg attack, three other Mauritanians were arrested in Bissau as collaborators and on January 12 all five were extradited to Mauritania. The three collaborators raised suspicion by photographing French and Bissau-Guinean authorities during and after the arrest.

14. (C) One of the men arrested in connection with the killings, Sidi Ould Sid Na, alias Abou Jenden, threatened the people of Guinea-Bissau in a dramatic rant as he boarded the

plane arranged specifically for the extradition. His promise to make Guinea-Bissau pay for their treatment of a "soldier of Allah" was captured by a local news crew and struck a chord of fear into a nation that has never seen terrorist activities. The threat was all the more chilling because it was delivered in Bissau-Guinean Creole, a language not spoken outside the country. JP Chief Lucinda Ahukarie confirmed to Poloff that Sid Na had previously lived in Guinea-Bissau for two years as a merchant. She did not have further information about the type of commerce or other activities in which he may have been involved during that time.

15. (U) French authorities controlled this operation from tracking them to the hotel in Bissau to arranging their extradition. The JP, which has jurisdiction over transnational crime including terrorism and drug trafficking does not have the resources to carry out these types of operations on its own. The JP only possesses one vehicle which functions only occasionally; they do not have any communications equipment; or even basic office supplies. Only in the past two months have a few computers, a camera, desks and a printer been donated by the UN office in Bissau. A generator was given by another donor, but the JP cannot afford fuel to keep it going. The handcuffs used on the Mauritians were just donated by the United Kingdom in late 2007. JP officers do not receive overtime or danger pay and their regular salaries are often many months delayed as are those of all public officials. Moreover, JP officers do not receive regular training and any officer that joined the force after 1991 has never received any formal training of any kind. JP Chief Ahukarie used her own money to buy food for the men who worked 48 hours straight on the Mauritanian case.

LINK TO DRUGS?

16. (C) Ahukarie believed at least one of the Mauritians was involved in drug trafficking but offered no further information. The JP confiscated about 600 Euros, 300 US dollars and two late-model Mitsubishi SUVs from the suspects. She said they entered Guinea-Bissau by going overland from Mauritania through Senegal and Gambia and planned to continue through Guinea-Conakry to Mali.

17. (C) Former drug czar Aphonso Te told Poloff he was concerned about the rise of drug trafficking and fundamental Islam side-by-side in Guinea-Bissau. He said a significant portion of the Fula tribe is converting to a more radical form of Islam called Mohabitas thanks to activist mosques and schools funded from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. He said Muslims have much more influence in Guinea-Bissau now than they did several years ago. He also noted most formal commerce is run by Muslim foreign nationals, primarily Lebanese and Mauritians. Although he did not go so far as to link their commercial activities to terrorist financing, he does suspect many Lebanese business owners are involved in drug trafficking.

PM LOOKS TO U.S. FOR HELP

18. (C) Prime Minister Martinho N'Dafa Cabi requested a meeting with EmbOffs in Dakar on January 22 to express concern over the al-Qaida link. Cabi reiterated that Guinea-Bissau does not even have a high security prison; police and border guards have no training or equipment; and the overwhelming need for assistance on every level makes for an enticing environment for transnational criminals or terrorists. Cabi feared there would be insufficient security for carnival festivities given Sid Na's threats of revenge. He told Poloffs that the most important need of Guinea-Bissau to confront all of these challenges is the return of the U.S. Embassy to Bissau. He said not only is the U.S. presence needed in the long term to strengthen bi-lateral cooperation, but it is also needed in the immediate term to take away the psychological edge traffickers and would-be terrorists have in the current environment of lawlessness.

COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST

¶9. (C) The efficiency with which the arrest and extradition were carried out is a testament to the GOGB's willingness to cooperate with friendly nations. However, this case also showed that without French intervention, the JP would have had no way of knowing the terrorists had entered Bissau and in any event would have been incapable of capturing them on their own. While the GOGB is chronically broke and unable to provide even the basic necessities to government agencies across the board, the JP seems particularly hard hit given the international outcry on drug trafficking. Most ministers drive around in new SUVs while JP investigators ride the bus. Ahukarie, who has been on the job less than one year, feels set up to fail and the pressures of the job are clearly getting to her. She appeared exhausted and at one point broke down in tears while listing the basic items she lacked to do her job.

¶10. (C) PM Cabi's plea to re-open the embassy was interesting given he has never been shy about requesting training and material assistance. His comments were earnest and probably reflected a real fear that Guinea-Bissau is at the mercy of terrorists. Currently, we provide no counter-terrorism assistance to Guinea-Bissau.

Visit Embassy Dakar's classified website at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.
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